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SMATHERS

From Yadkin Valley To Pigeon River

By SADIE SMATHERS PATTON

Smathers — from Yadkin Valley to Pigeon River →

(Continued on back inside cover)



S M A T H E R S
From Yadkin Valley To Pigeon River

SMATHERS AND AGNER FAMILIES

By SADIE SMATHERS PATTON

Published by the author.
HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
1954

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SMATHERS AND AGNER FAMILIES

"Theirs have been the world-sustaining arts of peace and upon that merit they have stood and will stand. Theirs the nobility of labor, the long pedigree of toil."

Rhinelanders on the Yadkin.

HAMMER

"There is much in the race we spring from affecting the individual and the community. The physical and mental traits we derive from our ancestors are not more marked and important than are the prejudices, aspirations and traditions which we drink in from childhood. No profound observer will ever estimate the conduct and capacities of a people without looking at their genealogical table and noting the blood which flows in their veins."

Z. B. VANCE

1144481

Dedicated to the Memory of my father

JOHN WESLEY SMATHERS

whose deep interest in his ancestors encouraged me to prosecute this study.

“People will never look forward to posterity
who never look back to their ancestors.”

EDMUND BURKE



Father Pierre Jean de Smet. Photo through courtesy of Rt. Rev. M. M. Hoffman, pastor St. Francis Xavier Church, Dyersville, Iowa.



Nelson Amanuel Smathers, grandson of the first comer to Dutch Cove, Johannes Smetter.

FOREWORD

Inadequate as this work may appear, there is contained within its pages the harvest from more than twenty years of effort to gather anything even approximating the history of the Smathers family who are descendants of John and Mary Agner Smathers, of Dutch Cove in Haywood County, North Carolina.

It is my purpose in compiling my notes in their present state to make sure that such as I have accomplished may be made available for some future historian who may be successful in carrying this work to a more complete summary.

In the course of accomplishing my self-appointed task, I have traveled roads through the Yadkin Valley, where the thought came to me many times that perhaps my feet were standing on ground once trod by these ancestors.

From eastern Carolina, along the "Great Road" from Yadkin Valley, through Virginia, to Pennsylvania, and from lower South Carolina, west to Tennessee, on to Colorado and California, faint clues have been followed, and with little yield of pertinent data.

Churches and old graveyards have been visited, and official records of several counties have been given exhaustive search, in an effort to gather more satisfactory facts than are here represented.

The peace and quiet, the dignity and atmosphere of antiquity which pervade the scene at Union Lutheran, Organ, and Lower Stone Churches, the apparently disused burial ground at Spencer, and the old German or Lutheran cemetery on Lee Street in Salisbury, have provided the courage to carry my work to a conclusion.

Appreciation must be given to R. L. Wark, an American citizen now living in Hendersonville, born of American parents in Germany, and educated there, whose knowledge of geographical locations and dialects of that country have been of great assistance, to W. D. Kizziah, C. P. Barringer, and Rev. Milton Whitener of Salisbury for their hearty cooperation and willing response to every request; and to the officials of Rowan County for their courteous services.

A study of these pages, as they portray the part the family of John and Mary Agner Smathers, and their ancestors before them, contributed to early life in North Carolina, provides a challenge to each descendant of successive generations.

SADIE SMATHERS PATTON.



Photostatic copy of pages from old German book of Martin Luther Sermons.

Wil. Smetter

Signature of Wil. Smetter, in his own handwriting. On will executed by him on May 11, 1818.

CHAPTER ONE

John and Mary Agner Smathers, New Settlers in Dutch Cove.

WHEN John and Mary Agner Smathers came, with their young family, to Western North Carolina to make a new home, they brought with them the customs, characteristics and language which had so marked and dominated their people in Rowan County since arrival of the first contingent of these Deutsch, or Palatinate immigrants, a generation or more earlier.

Almost as soon after the Revolution as lands in the State west of what had been the Cherokee frontier were opened for settlement, a steady stream of pioneers, starting before 1795, was coming across the Blue Ridge. Over the route through Hickory Nut Gap their way led—large numbers from the Jersey Settlement at the Trading Ford of the Yadkin to stop at beautiful Fairview—while stout-hearted people, chiefly from the Palatinate settlement along the Yadkin River, in Rowan County, pushed further along the western trail. They traveled the almost uncharted roads, through Buncombe County, beyond the little village of Asheville, on toward lands cloaked with unbroken virgin forests.

Some of the earliest settlements in what later became Haywood County were made along the Pigeon River and Hominy Creek, in Beaverdam District, where these German families, (often called Pennsylvania Deutsch) had appeared some years before 1800.

John and Mary Agner Smathers migrated to what soon became known as Dutch Cove, in the shadow of the mountain which still bears their name, a few years later.

Here, in their frontier home, they lived in close association with relatives and friends who had also come from the same neighborhood of Rowan County, a group made up of the Fulbrights, Schneiders, (Snyders), Millers, Christoffels (Christophers), Redsleafs (Rhodarmers), and others. They were all people with a common background—Deutsch, Rhinelanders, or Palatinates—descendants of brave refugees who had fled their native land, that part of Germany in the Rhine valley known as the Palatinate, to escape war and persecution. Little has been written about this strain of settlers coming to America, and North Carolina.

"It has been the misfortune of the Germans who at an early date settled in North Carolina not to have a historian at a time when it was

yet possible to collect the facts relating to their immigration into this colony. . . .

"It seems as if they never expected that it would be of any interest to any of their posterity or the general public of the State to know who they were, whence they came, or what part they had in laying the foundation of future character and greatness of the State."¹

As to the source of the Palatinate settlers in this state, it has been said:

"The conclusion is that in the absence of all State documents on that subject and the silence of all historians of North Carolina, that the Province of Pennsylvania, and not Germany furnished North Carolina with most of her German settlers located in the central and western part of the State."

There was a well established route by which early travel was diverted to Rowan County and surrounding territory in the state. The road from Pennsylvania was the usual travelway taken on trips between Germantown in that state and the Moravian community in North Carolina, shown on maps of the period as the "Great Road from the Yadkin River through Virginia to Philadelphia", a distance of some 450 miles.

However, travel from piedmont North Carolina to the port of Charlestown and other parts of coastal South Carolina—perhaps in its beginning taking the routes laid out by Indian hunters and traders—was not inconsiderable. The Germans of the Moravian settlement bought much of their required provisions, and marketed their surplus products at Charleston.² The first Palatinate settlers in Rowan also had much of their contact with the Old World through the port there.³

Of these pioneering settlers it has been said:

"The great stream of emigration from Germany to England and from thence to America, beginning rather feebly in the latter part of the 17th century has as its fundamental cause the great intellectual movement of the Reformation, and the equally intense Counter-Reformation, which began in the latter part of the 16th century, and extended far into the 17th century.

"Not only the wars which came in (Martin) Luther's time, and immediately following his death were caused by the Reformation, but the Thirty Years' War, and the wars in which the French king, Louis XIV involved Europe during his long reign were also very largely incited by the same spirit of enmity that animated the earlier Counter Reformation.

"In all these struggles no portion of Germany suffered so much as that part called the Lower Palatinate. Lying as it does on the eastern

boundary of France, it was easily accessible to the French soldiery; a fertile country, it offered excellent opportunity for maintaining an army; and being protestant, it was an especial object of resentment to the French King. . . .”⁴

To encourage the coming of refugees from such a war-torn Old World, South Carolina began efforts early after 1700 to attract this strain of immigration to its as yet unsettled lands.

In 1730, by royal authority, eleven townships were laid off in square plats on the sides of rivers in that state, each of them containing 20,000 acres and designed to encourage settlements. There, citizens were to have the right, when their population increased to 100 families, to send two membris to the General Assembly.

Of the eleven such townships, two were laid off on the Santee, or more properly, on the Congaree, a branch of the Santee, and the Santee.) These were Amelia, so called probably after the Princess Amelia; the township which was first called Congaree, later was called Saxe-Gotha by Gov. Broughton in 1736. Another, New Windsor, was on the Savannah River.

For some years previous to 1735, John Peter Purry, of Switzerland, was making efforts to plant colonies of settlers from that country in South Carolina, and had actually established one on the Savannah River, at a place called Purreysville. In a pamphlet which he freely distributed throughout Switzerland, Holland, North Germany and the Province of the Rhine, he gave such a glowing account of the country here that a great many settlers were induced to come to Carolina.⁵

Migration to South Carolina, as well as to the other American colonies, from the Old World where hardship and religious persecution had long been the lot of many of the people, was stimulated, and fanned to greater heights of interest.

From Switzerland, France and the surrounding country, large numbers, fleeing, over a long period of years, first to Germany, East Prussia and England, turned their faces toward America, seeking new homes.

One colony of about 200, to escape religious intolerance, left their native country of Salzburg, and came to Georgia in 1733, where they founded the historic settlement on the Savannah River, and organized the church still known as Ebenezer.

Many of the Germans who came first to Charleston and the settlements at and near Orangeburg later followed the great road traveled to and from the seaport by colonists in North Carolina, and became members of the growing colony in this State. There are no dates as to when they came, whether singly or in groups, but the general history

of their migration is probably well described by that which relates to those who came from Pennsylvania:

"It is impossible to date precisely the arrival of all those German colonists from Pennsylvania, as they all depended on themselves for leaving home and journeying southward; they arrived continuously for a number of years in succession, usually leaving home in the fall season, after the harvesting was over and the proceeds of the year's labor could be disposed of; they arrived at their place of settlement just before commencement of the winter season. The first arrival of the pioneer trains may have occurred about the year 1745, but the large body of these German colonists did not commence to settle in North Carolina until about the year 1750; this may be gathered partly from tradition, partly from the old family records in their German Bibles, but mostly from the title deeds to their lands which were always dated some years after their actual arrival.

"Wherever the Germans have located themselves, they have usually manifested certain traits of character which are upon the whole very commendable.

"The Germans are the most industrious settlers that have ever come to America; they are willing to endure any amount of toil to secure a permanent home, or an establishment over which they have entire control; they never shrink from labor that promises to be remunerative; everything around them must be well and profitably arranged; hence their farms usually present the appearance of order, thrift and comfort; all work must be well done, ere it can be satisfactory to them."⁶

Not only were these colonists of German extraction recognized as industrious and economical, but their purity of morals, Bernheim wrote, contrasted very favorably with some of the English colonists who came to Carolina to seek a change of fortune.

The immigrants, being an agricultural people, generally avoided settling in towns. They found in North Carolina lands that were fertile, plentiful and cheap, on a frontier where the only capital needed was thrift, energy and common sense—qualities possessed, as successive generations have proven—by the Germans in a marked degree—so they were soon blessed with an abundance.

Many thousands of them driven from the Fatherland by unfavorable economic conditions, were not long in developing from the Carolina wilderness substantial, and in some instances, handsome estates for themselves and their children. The lands lying between the Yadkin and the Catawba Rivers blossomed with their neat, pleasant farms surrounding plain but comfortable cabins.⁷

The historian further adds: "In 1771, the vestry of St. Luke's Parish,

Salisbury, states that in Rowan, Orange, Mecklenburg and Tryon Counties are already settled near three thousand German protestant families, and being very fruitful in that healthy climate, are besides vastly increasing by numbers of German protestants almost weekly arriving from Pennsylvania and other provinces of America."

One of the strongest settlements of these Palatinates was in the southeastern part of Rowan County, extending over into what later became Cabarrus. Adherents among them of both the Lutheran and German Reform faith brought Hymnal, Prayer Book and Bible, and when the first home had been completed so the family was sheltered, next thought was given to a building where religious services might be held.

"In every community where the Germans settled, a church and school house sprang up almost simultaneously with the settlement."

Coming as strangers to a strange land, home though they expected to make of it, the language and customs of these immigrants were those of the childhood scenes. Teachers were brought from the Old Country and classes in the small new schools were conducted in German, and it was not until years after the Revolution that the English language came into even limited use in the German settlements of North Carolina.

Many of these immigrants came from places quite distant to the Palatinate, yet they were all classed as Deutsch—meaning German. After their long wanderings in other lands, by the time they arrived in North Carolina, the people of this element had generally adopted a common, local German dialect, very similar to the speech of the Pennsylvania "Dutch". This dialect, often called "plattsdeutsch" or Low German, continued to be the speech of the Palatinate pioneers, and was used by some of the older ones living in Dutch Cove of Haywood County until just before 1900.

As these Palatinate settlers were absorbed more and more into the life of their new home in America, confusion of speech became doubly confounded. The dialect, in many instances varying among themselves according to the country from which they came, though used in home life and conversation, was not a written language; their school teachings and church services were conducted in High German, sometimes a bit strange to some of the immigrants.

It seems easy to understand that in dealing with an English-speaking citizenry of the Carolinas, much difficulty and variation in the spelling of the dialectic forms, or in translation of writing done in German script, should have been a natural result.

Gradually, in the newly formed United States of America, having to transact their daily business in what, to the people from the Palatinate, was an alien speech, the language of the forefathers began to fall into disuse.

Time also wrought a hardr deprivation; living among English and Scotch-Irish, the German names, most of them dialectic when these immigrants reached America, began to show signs of Anglecizing. Thus, with the passing years, many of the original forms and spellings were lost. Today, there are in North Carolina large families whose names indicate an English ancestry, when in reality they are of Palatinate or German descent, and of whom little records are to be found.

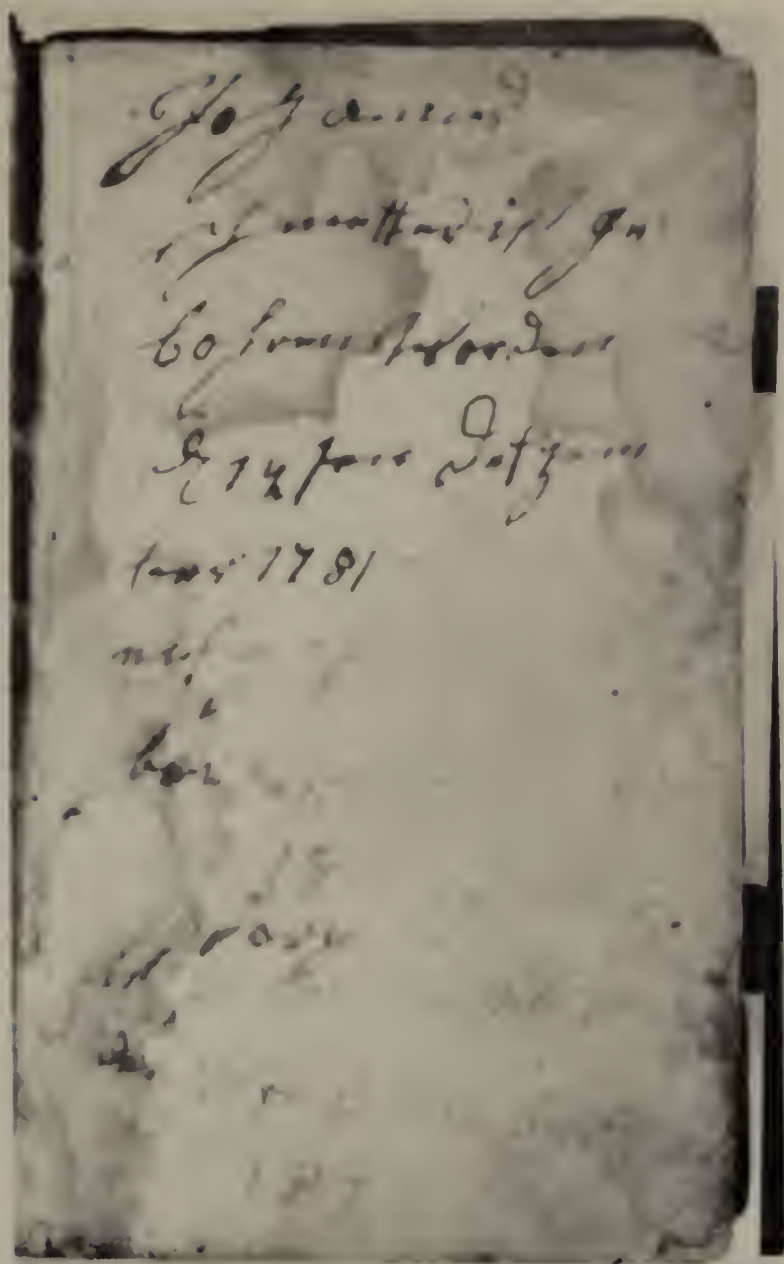
Such distinctive racial traits and elements which so marked the early German settlers in the central part of the State were even more pronounced, and endured for a generation or two longer among the Deutsch people living in the coves of Haywood County. There today they are still remembered and even to be recognized among older members of long established families.

These German families settling on and near Pigeon River, being pioneers in a newly-developing part of the State, where the civil records were instituted for a new County (Haywood) about the same time they arrived, has made the task of unearthing any evidence of Old World ancestry or racial history among them one beset with many difficulties.

Mary Agner Smathers survived her husband John for long years after his death on February 10, 1825. There are reasons for thinking she remained at the first home in Dutch Cove for some time, but the latter part of her life was spent at the historic old Shook house in the village of Clyde. This place, with its chapel on the third floor, is hallowed by memories of the first Bishop of the Methodist Church in America, Rt. Rev. Francis Asbury, who visited there and held services often. Many of the aged woman's personal belongings, stored there while it was the home of her son Levi, have been carefully preserved by her descendants.

Holding highest place in this collection of Mary's possessions is an old book, its wooden backs covered with leather, and fastened by hand made brass clasps. This book, published in Germantown, Penna., in 1795, is in the German language, and contains songs and prayers by Martin Luther.⁸

An inscription on the fly leaf of this old volume, with its brittle paper and ink faded almost beyond deciphering, has preserved the key which opens a door into past history of the Smathers family before its first members came across the Blue Ridge to Pigeon River.



Page from book of Martin Luther Sermons showing record of birth of Johannes Smetter, Eisig Smetter and Yorg Smetter.

There, in German script, appears the record, which translated reads:
 Johannes Smetter was born on the 17th December, 1781.
 Eisig Smetter born 7 Febr. 184 (eighteen hundred four).
 Yorg Smetter, (words not legible) 187, (eighteen hundred seven).⁹

- 1 Early Reformed Settlements in North Carolina. Rev. Wm. Welker, Colonial Records, Vol. 8, page 729.
- 2 Moravian Records. Fries.
- 3 The Lutherans in North and South Carolina. Bernheim.
- 4 Account of the Founding of New Bern. L. Vincent H. Todd.
- 5 *History of Orangeburg County*. A. S. Salley.
- 6 The German Settlements and the Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina. Bernheim, 1872.
- 7 *History of North Carolina*. Connor.
- 8 Owned by Walter G. Smathers, Clyde, N. C.
- 9 Translated by Louisa E. Rebmann Vollmer, Johannes Boehme, and R. L. Wark.



ORGAN CHURCH

Originally called "Zion," it derives its more familiar name from the pipe organ made for it by Johannes Steigerwalt (John Stirewalt). Completed in 1794, this is the third house of worship of a Lutheran congregation formed nearly two centuries ago. Organized in 1745. The entry of land by Wm. Smadder, 300 acres on Dutch Second Creek, was situated about two miles from this church.



GRACE (LOWER STONE) EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCH
Its old records show that the infant, Wilhelm Schmetter, was baptised here
in 1794.



Heraldic Blazon of the Coat of Arms
Smathers Family

Shield: Gules (red) a cross of lozenges or, (gold) between them and in the center an annulet.

Crest: A coronet.

—*Reitstap's Armorial General.*

CHAPTER TWO

Citizens on Dutch Second Creek in the Yadkin Valley

THE name of the first known ancestor coming to North Carolina, which through a process of changes in spelling became Smathers, had originally been de Smet, of Rochelle, in France. Members of the family removing from there to the Province of Lorraine, allied themselves with the Protestant movement then dominant in France—whose followers were called Huguenots.

Beginning with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve, in 1572, life for the Huguenots became one fraught with danger, and conditions imposed upon the members were intolerable. Fleeing for their lives from their native France, the Huguenots, among them one branch of the de Smet family, sought refuge in nearby Protestant countries—England, Holland, Switzerland and the Palatinate District of Germany, along the Rhine River.

Tho little has been learned as to other branches of the de Smet family in France, there is reason to think at least some of its members found refuge in other counties. When lands along the banks of the Missouri River in Western Iowa were opened for white settlers, among ministers of the Church going there was Father Pierre Jean de Smet, a Jesuit priest, said to have been of Belgian or Flemish descent. Little further is known of his background, and while it has been said that he had at least one niece in America, her name or whereabouts can not now be given.

With the passing of several generations, those members of the de Smet family who had fled their native land and found refuge in the Pflatz or Palatinate country intermarried with the native Germans. Through such intermarriage and inheritance of the racial traits, later generations of this line of the family became Germanized or Teutonized, and were followers of the teachings of Martin Luther, which then dominated the religious tenets of Germany.

The original name which in France had been de Smet became in the language of their adopted land Smeter, later becoming Smetter, Schmetter, or other dialectic forms peculiar to the geographic area where members of any particular branch of the family lived.¹

In the period of bloodshed and persecution which reached its climax in the Thirty Years' War in Germany, few parts of that country suf-

ferred more from devastation than that area on the Rhine known as the Palatinate, and territory adjoining it.

For a comprehensive understanding of conditions, all who are interested in their Palatinate ancestry should read his description of "Old World Background," given by J. George Frederick, in his book, *Pennsylvania Dutch*.

Early after 1700, the former people from France and other adjacent countries, who, as religious refugees, had been absorbed into the colony of inhabitants residing in the Palatinate and lands surrounding, found further living there intolerable. Then began the migration—to Rotterdam—London—and on to America—which from the first few arriving, grew to a powerful stream of displaced persons, seeking a new home—probably reaching the height of the movement by the beginning of the American Revolution.

Records of Immigrant Lists and Petitions for land in the settlements of Palatinate and other Old World peoples of South Carolina contain many names which seem to be dialectic forms of the Schmetter-Smetter peoples from the Palatinate. Among these were Adam Smit and John Geo. Smit, who had arrived from Rotterdam and made application for land grants in 1753.

John Smeetzer of Amelia Township was issued a grant for land on June 6, 1753. Frederick Smitzley, (also spelled Fredereck Smelyle) received a grant for 50 acres in Saxe-Gotha December 16, 1752, and an additional 150 acres shortly after.²

An Immigrant List of 1766 shows among the names of those arriving at the port of Charleston, S. C.

John Schnetter,

Anna Aria Elizabeth Schnetter, age 35, and

Philip Charles Schnetter, age 5.

A short time later, John Schnetter petitioned for and was granted 200 acres of land.³

An interesting field of research might be opened up, if effort were made to determine from just where each of these immigrants began the voyage to America, or where they later went. No records so far have revealed further information concerning them, or any one of them.

The laws of the several states in America where immigrants from the Old World debarked, to become citizens of the colonies here, from early days had required that each person so entering should sign an oath of loyalty to the King of England.

Doubtless the persecuted, war torn, homeless peoples of the Palatinate and other countries, beginning the long, hard voyage to seek a new home in America knew nothing of the war rumblings and revolt fast

moving toward its climax during the years after 1766, and there seems no reason for doubting that a late group of settlers did arrive after the time when they could take the required oath and apply for land grants under the Royal government.

Arriving at the port of Charleston, in the period from 1765 to 1775, many found themselves facing conditions similar to those which had made for a life of hardship in the Old Country, not only for themselves, but for more than one preceding generation. With the American Revolution already at hand, a decision must be made, either to return home, to take part in the conflict developing here, or to move on to parts where the terrors of war would not reach. Thus countless numbers of these wandering immigrants, would-be new citizens, reaching port after the Province of South Carolina withdrew from the Royal government, found no authority to which they could swear allegiance, and at this late date their names are to be found on no records, unless they remained as citizens, to be accepted later after a State government was set up and began to function.

There is an old tradition, handed down through several early generations of his descendants, that Wilhelm Schmetter told his hearers:

"There were four of our family came to America; we came to Charleston, and from there, three went back, while I came to North Carolina."

To give any weight to such floating legend is to leave the solid ground of history—but then it must be asked:

"Why this old story? What is its origin?"

Does this have foundation in the fact that a group of Palatinate immigrants, arriving at the port of Charleston, found a people who either had, or were preparing to declare themselves no longer bound by loyalty to an English king? That with a future in a country where war and hardship might be no less than had been left behind in the Old World, three of the group decided to return to a land where life was at least along familiar patterns? Did the rolling green fields of Yadkin Valley, yonder on the road traveled from Charleston to their homes by the gentle Moravians lead Wilhelm Schmetter to take this route?

The first known record of Wilhelm Schmetter in America is in Rowan County, N. C., where he made an entry for land in 1778. Since the document states that it covers land on which were located his improvements, (home) this Palatinate immigrant, like many of his fellow settlers, seems to have been a resident here some time before making a formal request for title. Thus, reaching America, and North Carolina about 1775 or 1776—about the same time the colonies renounced their allegiance to the English Government, this German newcomer

would have been among the many who remained unlisted until he acquired land, or was a citizen enrolled in some civil capacity.

Land Entry No. 1367, Rowan County, N. C., Register of Deeds Office, issued in 1778 to William Smether, was for 350 acres on Dutch Second Creek, including his improvement (home) adjoining Alexander Clingman.

This land was located on Dutch Second Creek two or three miles below Lowerstone Church, and on the way to St. Peters Church, also on Second Creek, East of Rockwell.⁴

The List of Taxable Persons for Year 1778, Capt. George Henry Berger's District shows William Smadder, 300 acres. This district was the Organ-Lowerstone Church section of Rowan.⁵

This is the first mention found in the records of that county of a man whose name was, in later documents, spelled (variously) Schmetter, Smetter, Smither, Smyther, Smather, and who was the ancestor of the Smathers family now so widely represented in the citizenry of Western North Carolina.

"There was only one man in Rowan County under the name of William Smathers, and I find the name listed in several spellings. In fact his was the only family of that name in Rowan County. I served nineteen years as Register of Deeds and made exhaustive study of the residents of the county in the old days. I know where most of them lived and something in general about most of them."⁶

A grant was issued by the State of North Carolina on Nov. 10, 1784, for 282 acres of land on the waters of Dutch Second Creek, a tributary of the Yadkin River, wherein the grantee was named as William Smether, (Ger.)

If Wilhelm Schmetter, like many others had been a resident of Rowan County, North Carolina two or three years before he made the entry for his land in 1778, he must have reached here about 1775 or 1776, and immediately set about developing the property he chose for a home. It will be noted that the entry of 1778 describes 350 acres of land with improvements.

At that time, and until after the close of the Revolutionary War, military affairs and defense of home and life were of necessity the most urgent concern of both government and people living in the state.

The citizens and settlers on their newly established farms were beset by a triple threat. Indians on the frontier, ever ready to take up the war hatchet, large groups of Tories and Royalist sympathizers in the interior, always on the alert for favorable opportunities for revolt, and the British on the eastern shores created such dangerous conditions that practically every home was an armed garrison.⁷

The Colonial Government of North Carolina in 1669 had passed laws requiring that "all inhabitants of North Carolina above 17 and under 60 *should be bound* to bear arms."⁸

As shadows of the coming struggle for American Independence deepened, the State's leaders realized that plans of defense must be set up. The governor, Richard Caswell, writing his son in 1774 concerning the dangers that threatened people here, counselled that 'it be urged upon the neighbors (in North Carolina) that it is indispensably necessary for them to arm and form into a company or companies of independents.'⁹

North Carolina's first line of defense against the growing danger was the Militia. The basis of this, as authorized by Congress in 1775, was the county—each unit was required to enroll its Militia into companies of not less than fifty men each, exclusive of commissioned officers.

These companies later were divided into four classes, each of which in its turn was to be called into active service *WHEN NEEDED*.

The new constitution adopted in 1776 was very short and simple, embodying merely the framework of government—details of administration were left to be worked out by the legislature. There was no violent break, however, between the new state government and the old colonial government.

The first Assembly of North Carolina, held under this new Constitution, met in 1777. Chapter 1 of Laws passed by it was entitled

"An Act to Establish a Militia in this State,"

its provisions based largely on the Militia law of the Colonial Government, with some changes. Under this Act of 1777 "*all effective men* in the State from 16 to 50, inclusive, were embraced in the Militia and subject to draft."¹⁰

"Each person so drafted, obliged to serve or find an able bodied man in room."

"Each Militia soldier shall be furnished with a Good gun, shot bag and powder horn, a Cutlass or Tomahawk."¹¹

Connor—History of North Carolina—says that no accurate muster rolls of the Militia during the Revolution were kept and the records of their service are very meagre.

The Safety Committee of Rowan for 1775 submitted the following:

"A List of Officers nominated by this Committee to be returned to Provincial Council Agreeable to Resolve of Congress," wherein there appeared the name of Capt. George Henry Berger (also spelled in the records Berrier, Barrier and Barringer), a man known to have been a resident and property owner of Organ-Lowerstone Militia or Tax District of Rowan County.¹²

The records do not show any machinery set up for tax lists in the

Counties, and tho Capt. Barringer, (Berger, Berrier or Barrier) does not report the Muster Roll for his Company of Militia, later in that same year, 1775, he returned a list of the number in his company as "Taxables, 120."

To support the position that Wilhelm Schmetter, (William Smathers) was a member of the Militia, subject to call to military duty, and a patriot rendering substantial service to the American cause in production of essential supplies, the following references are cited: Colonial Records, Vol. 13, pps 389-390.

April 1778.

Address from Rowan Militia officers for consideration.

To Messrs. The Speaker and Members of the General Assembly in the State of North Carolina sitting at New Bern April 1778.

"We can not omit expressing our approbation of the respectable footing on which you have placed the Militia of this state by two late acts, (1775 and 1777, cited) in order that they may be ready in case of any invasion or sudden alarm; but from our experience we can assure you that from the frequent calling forth the *industrious yeomen* of this county into the field many great inconveniences may arise, one of which we shall mention, **WHICH IS THE HINDRANCE OF TILLAGE** and consequently a scarcity of which in our humble opinion we have more reason to dread than any reinforcement which may be sent to Gen. Howe.

"And according to our conception of serving in the field Regulars are greatly preferable to Militia for many reasons that will readily occur to you.

"We on our part, (and that of our neighboring counties) would be willing to submit to any tax that could be reasonably laid on us, together with other parts of the State in order to augment our Continental Army."

Among the officers who signed this address from Rowan County was George Harvey (Henry) Berger of the Organ-Lowerstone District.

Later in the same year of 1778, Capt. George Henry Berger filed with officials of Rowan County his

"List of Taxable Persons for year 1778, Capt. Geo. Henry Berger's District."

At that period, the counties, instead of being divided into townships, had what were designated as Taxable Districts or Militia Districts—and among names on the list filed by Berger was that of "William Smadders, 300 acres."

During that same year, 1778, Land Entry No. 1367, Rowan County,

N. C., (as filed in the office of the Register of Deeds,) was issued to Wm. Smether for 350 acres on Dutch Second Creek, (the Organ-Lowerstone District), whereon, it was stated, were located his improvements, (home) adjoining Alex. Clingman.

That Wm. Smether was an "industrious yeoman," loyal to the American cause seems conclusive in the light of laws passed in 1777, under which the property and lands of all persons yielding allegiance to the British were ordered confiscated.

It may reasonably be concluded, from this entry of 1778, that Wm. Smadders, (Smether, Schmetter or Smathers) was and must have been known as an advocate of the American cause, subject to call by Capt. George Henry Berger for service in times when danger threatened, or to otherwise aid in the struggle for American independence. A farmer owning and occupying 350 acres of land, he might correctly be classified as an 'industrious yeoman', whose tillage and furnishing of essential supplies for the people was of sufficient importance to justify his submitting to taxes being assessed against him, for the employment of a regular Continental service man in his stead.

Wm. Smadders continued in this status on the Taxable or Militia Lists, as shown by the return of Capt. Frederick Gremmenger, (Krimminger) for this same Organ-Lowerstone District in 1784.

During that same year, 1784, he received another grant from the State of North Carolina—and later bought adjoining lands, where he continued to live until his death in 1823.

The family of William Smether, (Wilhelm Schmetter), if we may judge from mention in early records, and their transactions with people of the neighborhood by some of his children, was identified with both the Lutherans at Organ Church and the German Reformed congregation of Lower Stone.

Historic Organ Church, (Zion), located about fifteen miles below Salisbury, was established by its German congregation in 1745.¹³ The first building, known as the Hickory Church, built of logs, and used jointly by the Lutherans and German Reformed, was situated some seven miles from the present location. A second structure, also of logs, was erected later, at a site in the rear of the church now used by the congregation. The present impressive building of stone was commenced before the Revolution and completed in 1794.

This congregation, which was first called Zion, came to be widely known by the accepted name of Organ because of the musical instrument of this type which once occupied a gallery facing the chancel. The instrument, one of the earliest in the county, was built by Johannes

Steigerwalt, (John Stirewalt) who came to the community while the present building was in course of construction.

The Rev. C. A. G. Storch, a Lutheran minister who began his work in Rowan immediately after his arrival from Germany in 1788, sent reports to his superiors there the next year that Organ was one of the largest and strongest of his three churches, having a membership of eighty seven families. The congregation at that time, he wrote, was building a home for him, and plans were in the making for purchase of a plantation, also. At Salisbury, where he was then residing, an academy had been established, and he had also formed a small German school. He reported the prospect of confirming about fifty children at the next harvest season.¹⁴

The first building erected by the congregation of Zion, (Organ) Church was used by the Lutherans and German Reformed, the early ministers serving both congregations.

"The members of these churches are greatly inter-married, so that passing from one communion to the other has never been a difficult question. Indeed, they did not make any account of the confessional difference."¹⁵

After the present church building had been completed and was in use at Organ, the Reformed Germans, who had continued to hold their meetings in the old log church, began construction of their present house of worship, Grace Church, called Lower Stone, which was completed about 1810.¹⁶

Recent discovery of an early baptismal record, faded and much worn, among the archives of Lower Stone, bears witness that Wilhelm Schmetter, an infant, was baptized there in 1794. The portion of the record which contained the name of the father is missing; the name of the mother is given as Magdalena.¹⁷

The autobiography of Rev. George Boger, who was ordained as a German Reformed Minister at Savitz Church, ten miles from Salisbury, on March 6, 1802, says that he pursued his studies for some time under the Lutheran minister at Organ, Rev. C. A. G. Storch. Mr. Boger at that time was in his twenty first year, and among the persons who signed the petition requesting his ordination were *Wilhelm Schmetter*, John Shoeman and several others whose names are connected with the early community near Organ and Lower Stone Churches.¹⁸

William Smether, sometime after he was granted his first land on Dutch Second Creek, bought other property in the same vicinity, as shown by deed from Christian Shoeman, dated Feb. 13, 1796, which recites a consideration of 73 pounds, 10 shillings, as of record in Deed Book 14, page 400 Rowan County Register of Deeds office. He was

granted 100 acres of land in 1799, and subsequently bought two additional tracts, one of 31 acres, the other 13.

Wm. Smatter listed 300 acres of land in Organ District in 1784.

The Census of 1790 for Rowan County shows:¹⁹

William Smathers

Males over 16	Males under 16	Females, including head of family
2	2	5

Beyond the fact that her name, from the baptismal record of Wilhelm Schmetter in 1794, appeared as Magdalena, nothing has been found as to when the wife shown by this Census died, who she had been before marriage or where she is buried.

Under early laws in North Carolina, in effect until after 1800, every property owner was required to establish and maintain a burial ground on his home place. This was not enforced in localities where there was a consecrated plot provided by any of the early churches for interment. At Lower Stone, where the baptism of Magdalena's child is of record, there are many very old graves with stones so weathered that their inscriptions can no longer be deciphered, so that if she or any others of the family are buried there, this can not now be determined.

William Smather, in 1809, is shown on the Tax Lists of Capt. Andrew Bowers' Company for Rowan County, as having listed 31 acres of land and 1 poll.²⁰ If he owned property in other companies, no record has been found.

William Smether (*Ger.*) was issued a certificate of marriage to M. Lentz on March 16, 1809, with George Betz and A. D. Osborne as bondsmen.²¹

William Smeter affixed his signature to a Will dated May 11, 1818, which was witnessed by Jacob Pool and Johannes Harnbarger.²² The body of this Will appears to be in the handwriting of a person skilled in the use of English script, but the signature of the maker, *Wil. Smetter*, and that of the witness Harnbarger are in German.²³

The executor named in this Will, which was filed for probate in 1823, is "my beloved son, John Hartman," the husband of Molly Smitter. As some evidence that he lived nearby, there is of record in Book 20, page 242, Rowan Deed Register, a deed dated Dec. 11, 1811, to John Hartman from Christian Tar, conveying land "on the North side of Dutch Creek, *William Smither's* corner."

There is no record of Wil. Smetter's son Jacob known as of the date he made this Will, and both Johannes Smetter and his brother Henry, sons of the testator, were then domiciled in Haywood County.

Jacob, generally believed to be the oldest son of Wil. Smetter, must have been born during or before the year 1775, as we find the first

In the name of God Amen ----- I William Smith
Rowan County in the State of North Carolina planten
Very weak and Sound in Body But of perfect
Sound Mind and memory thanks be God for the
Same and Calling unto Mind the Mortality of
My Body and knowing that it is appointed
all Man must to die I do this 11th day of May
In the year of our Lord one thousand eight hun-
dred and Eighteen I Mak and ordaine this to be
My last Will and Testament I give and Recommend
my Soul unto the Hands of the Almighty God
I give it My Body and I Recommend unto the Earth
to be buryed in a decent Manner and ~~at the~~
soughting But I Shall receive the Same againe by
the mighty power of God and as touching all
My Estate Whenev^r the it has pleased God to bless
Me With in his life I give and divide and dispose
of the Same in the following Manner and forme and
Will and bequesth to my beloved Wife Margaret
Should I Die first to have what property She was poss^s
of when I Married her and My Loom and quillwork
and what necessary fix belongs to it and fifty Doll^{rs}
in Money Which is to Come out of My property after
My Death

Secondly I Will and bequeath what property is left after
My Death to be paid and outstanding debts Collected and
after My wife is paid as above the Balance to be Divided
Equal Amongst all My Children.

and for the true performance of this My Last Will and
Testament I constitute and appoint My well beloved
John Hartman Executor Revoking and Disannulling all former
wills in witness whereof I have hereunto set My name and
affixed My Seal the day and year above Written
in witness hereof. Done at Nov 11 1861

Wm. J. Hartman

~~Witness hereof~~

record of land deeded to him by his father on Feb. 3, 1796, as shown in Book 16, page 416, of Rowan Deed Records, in 1798, for a consideration of 100 pounds. This property lay on Dutch Second Creek, and is described as "part of the 282 acres first acquired by William *Smether* in 1784."

The Deed Records for Rowan County show that in 1801, Jacob Smather purchased a tract from John Stirewalt, (Steigerwalt), and in 1804, there was a conveyance to him from the Rev. C. A. G. Storch, the pioneer Lutheran minister who preached at Organ Church and lived in that general vicinity. Henry Giles and Jacob Brower each conveyed property to Jacob Smather that same year.

It appears that Jacob *Smether* in 1809 had property listed for taxes, with a note saying "Given in to Jacob Lyerly".²⁴

Deeds conveying land situated in Salisbury to George Rufty and Jacob Cratzer in 1807 are of record in the office of the Register of Deeds for Rowan County, wherein the grantor is named as Jacob Smather, tho the signature appears to be in German, (not translated.)

Marriage Records of Rowan County show that a certificate was issued for Jacob Smether, (Ger) and Katherine Dew on April 17, 1795, with Peter Brown and J. Troy as bondsmen.

Rumple's History of Rowan County lists this same man among the householders of Salisbury who in 1811 were required by that town to keep ready for service in case of fire one leather bucket.

The Census of 1810 for Salisbury has listed Jacob Smathers, with one male between 26 and 45 and one male over 45. Also one female under 10; one between 25 and 45, and no slaves.

The Tax List of 1822 for Organ Section, (Rowan County) contains the name of Jacob Smatter as having an estate of \$300.

No further trace of this family has been found, though it has been said some of its members were buried in an old graveyard at Spencer. A careful search of stones still standing there, as well as in the old German graveyard at Salisbury, failed to provide further data.

To judge from the fact that Deed records of Rowan County show Henry Smather conveyed property there in 1797, it may be concluded that he was born prior to 1776.

John Smether, (so written in the deed itself as it appears on record,) made a conveyance of property in 1807, by deed recorded in Book 20, page 429 of Rowan Records, for Lot No. 19, in the south square of Salisbury, for a consideration of \$325. The signature to this deed as recorded is

"Johannes Smather".

John *Smather* had listed for taxes in Capt. Wood's Company of Rowan in 1809,

1 town lot

300 acres of land

1 white poll.²⁵

Salisbury, in 1790, is described as having fifty or sixty houses, of which ten were German homes.²⁶ Though the town no doubt grew rapidly between that time and 1807, John Smather and his brother may be considered among its early property owners.

John Smather signed the marriage bond of Peter Egenor and Catherine Rough on October 21, 1809, as that document appears of record.

There is registered in Book 31, page 462 of the Rowan County Deed record, a conveyance from John *Smether* to John Hartman, (Big) dated Feb. 10, 1810, for land on the west side of Dutch Second Creek, for a consideration of \$16. This instrument was witnessed by Jacob Van Pool and Wil. Schmetter. It is signed, according to the registration,

"Johannes Smether

her

Mary Smether"

mark.

This record of Mary Smether is the first mention found of her as the wife of John Smether. In the absence of any civil record, it may be assumed that they were married in accordance with Church custom.

The German colonists in North Carolina endeavored to preserve their language and customs.²⁷ However, pioneer conditions often forced them to adopt new ways, as practiced by the people around them. Shortly after coming to Rowan in 1789, Rev. Arnold Roschen wrote to his superiors in Germany:²⁸

"Marriages here are performed in two modes; the one according to the rules of the Church requires to be announced three times; the other is managed as follows: The groom gets a certificate from Salisbury, rides, accompanied by his friends, with his bride to the minister, or, if none is in the place, to the magistrate where the marriage takes place."

This marriage by civil authorities was resorted to principally when the service of a minister was not available. The religious faith of these early settlers was, almost without exception, Reformed German or Lutheran, and in their life the church was the most important influence—their principal social element. Members of the Reformed Church, during the early years after reaching North Carolina, were only too often without benefit of their ministers and were served by

those of the Lutheran faith—a circumstance which was frequently reversed. With the church buildings, in most communities, used jointly by the two congregations, the marriage of many couples, though performed according to the rules of their Church, did not always appear on the proper records of the old German archives.

Ministers of both denominations laid emphasis on the training and instruction given their people with regard to marriage.

"Persons generally marry very young," wrote Rev. Mr. Roschen. "He that will work can soon have a plantation; and poor people are not to be met here at all. A person can often meet with families that have thirteen or fourteen children, nearly all living."

'My catechumens, whom I have instructed three days in every week for seven weeks, consist partly of young married persons, some of them as old as thirty years, and young persons from sixteen to twenty years of age. Among other things, I advise them not to intermarry with persons of other nationalities, because such marriages are generally unhappy. . . ."

Rev. Mr. Nussman, writing to Germany, also expressed his convictions as to marriage:

"This one thing above all I wish and request; that no one come in here who has already married in Germany An American wife is in our circumstances infinitely better adapted."

Though no records of the Church as to marriages in the Smetter family have yet been found, there appear several among the Civil Marriage Records of Rowan County:

William Grucklen and Elizabeth Smather, Jan. 9, 1789.

The bondsman signed this in German, not translated.

John Hartman and Molly Smitter, Jan. 22, 1799.

Bondsmen: Adam Coble and Edwin J. Osborne.

William Smether (Ger) and M. Lentz, Mar. 16, 1809.

Bondsmen: George Betz and A. D. Osborne.

Jacob Lents and Christina Smather, Mar. 14, 1813.

John Smather, (Ger) signed with George Dunn as bondsmen, thus proving that the ancestor who came to Dutch Cove in Haywood County was at that time in Rowan, whether there as a resident or simply on a return visit, at the time of his sister's marriage. Jacob Lentz may have been a son of Margaret Lentz, widow, who married William Smether in 1809, though this has not been established.

From this date, there is no further record showing that Johannes Smetter was in Rowan at a later date, or that he participated in any further real estate conveyances, either as grantee or grantor. Papers among his personal files show, however, that on November 7, 1815,

he purchased of John Miller, of Lincoln County, for a consideration of \$550, two slaves, China, a young woman, and her child Adam. The granting clause in the Bill of Sales names the purchaser as John Smythers.²⁹

Whether this ancestor owned other slaves in addition to these is not known. That there were other slave owners among the little group of German settlers living in Dutch Cove of Haywood County and nearby localities is proven by the reports of Rev. Nehemiah Bonham, showing that he baptized slaves on more than one occasion while pastor of the little Lutheran Church of Morning Star.³⁰

- 1 *Armourial Bearings*. J. B. Reitstap. W. E. Hennessee, Heraldic Consultant.
- 2 Council Journal of S. C., Archives of Historical Commission.
- 3 These names are variant spellings of Schmetter or Smetter.
- 4 Statement of W. D. Kizziah, who served for 19 years as Register of Deeds of Rowan County.
- 5 Same as above
- 6 Letter from W. D. Kizziah to author.
- 7 History of North Carolina. R. D. W. Connor.
- 8 Colonial Records, Vol. 10, p. 320.
- 9 History of North Carolina. Connor.
- 10 State Records of N. C., Vol. XXIV, Laws 1777.
- 11 State Records of N. C., Vol. XXIV.
- 12 Colonial Records, Vol. 10, page 320.
- 13 A historical marker has recently been placed at Organ Church by the State Department of Archives and History.
- 14 Bernheim's History of the Lutheran Settlements.
- 15 The Early Reformed Church in N. C. Col. Records, Vol. 8, p. 729.
- 16 A historical marker has been placed at Lower Stone by the State Department of Archives and History.
- 17 Personal letter from Rev. Milton Whitener to S. S. P.
- 18 The Early Reformed Church in N. C. Col. Records, Vol. 8, p. 729.
- 19 Colonial Records.
- 20 Original Tax List on file in State Dept. of Archives and History.
- 21 Records of Rowan County.
- 22 Original on file in State Dept. of Archives and History.
- 23 Translated by Louise E. Rebmann Vollmer, Johannes Boehme, and R. L. Wark.
- 24 Original Tax List on file in State Dept. of Archives and History.
- 25 Original Tax List on file in State Dept. of Archives and History.
- 26 History of German Settlements in North and South Carolina. Bernheim.
- 27 North Carolina History. Connor.
- 28 Helmsted Church Reports.
- 29 Bill of Sale owned by Walter G. Smathers, Clyde, N. C.
- 30 Reports of Rev. Nehemiah Bonham to Synod of East Tennessee.



HeGENER

- Shield: D'azure (blue) au chevron d'Or, (gold) Charge' (Charged) de trois roses, (with three roses) de gules (of red).
- Crest: Un demi-vol (a demi wing) aux armes de l'ecer, (of the color of the shield.)

—*Reitstap's Armorial General.*

CHAPTER THREE

The Agner Family in Yadkin Valley

THIS family name, in common with the larger number of those among the German immigrants in North Carolina, has seen many changes in its original spelling since the family came to Rowan County. In earlier times, there had also been wide variations, as it appeared in records spelled *EGGE*, *EGEN*, *EGER*, *later becoming EGENER*, and probably it was one time widely known as *HEGENER*.

Armorial bearings, according to the noted continental authority, Rietstap, were registered as the

HEGENER ARMS¹

The earliest mention of the family now known as Agner in Rowan County, where tradition says its members settled in what is now Providence township before 1760, is in Colonial Records, in the entry showing that in 1753, Jacob Eagner was paid for beef furnished to feed the Indians.

Gov. Dobbs, visiting the settlement of Palatinate families in the Province of Carolina in 1755, wrote:

"There are twenty two families of German or Swiss origin, who are all an industrious people."²

The tide of Palatinate immigration reaching the shores of Pennsylvania increased so rapidly that by 1727, the officials of that state began keeping records of the new arrivals. The lists of these, until after 1737, were published in Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, and until 1738, the captains' lists included names of all male passengers over sixteen years of age coming on each ship.

All males among these new comers who had reached their majority were required to sign an oath of allegiance, beginning with 1727, which read:

'We, subscribers, natives and late inhabitants of the Palatine upon the Rhine, and places adjacent, having transported ourselves into this Province of Pennsylvania, a colony subject to the crown of Great Britain, in hopes and expectations of finding a retreat and peaceable settlement therein,

Do solemnly promise and engage that we will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His present Majesty, King George the Second, and his successors, kings of Great Britain, and will be faithful to the proprietors of this Province, and that we will demean ourselves peaceably

to all His said Majesty's subjects, strictly observe and conform to the Laws of England, and of this Province, to the utmost of our power and the best of our understanding."³

The records so kept from lists supplied by the captain of each incoming ship show that on Sept. 30, 1727, seventy Palatines with their families, about three hundred persons, imported in the ship Molly, John Hodgeson, Master, from Rotterdam, late from Deal, appeared, repeated and signed the Declaration—among these being:

Joh. Metheis Egener

Joh. Metheis Egener, Jr.³

It has been said that most of the number commonly called Low Germans among these Palatinate immigrants came from Cleves, the Dutchy of Westphalia, though many of them may have been in England for a generation or more.

There is nothing to show where Joh. Metheis Egener and his family went after landing, but the name Agner, (a form it took in North Carolina shortly after 1800) appears in earlier records of Virginia, in that section where some of the pioneering settlers had been Palatinates.⁴

Some indication that the Eagners who were later residents of North Carolina may have lived at least for a few years in Virginia, prior to their appearance here, appears in a land conveyance to Jacob *Eagner* in Rowan County, dated Sept. 17, 1753. In this, James Robertson conveys to him land on the south side of Cutaba, for a consideration of 43 pounds, *current money of Virginia*. This deed is of record in Book 1, page 50.

In Book 2, page 83, of the Rowan County records, there is registration of another deed to this man for 500 acres of land on Clark's Creek.

Jacob Eagner and his wife, Mary, in addition to lands in Rowan County, were also large property owners under deeds recorded in Mecklenburg County. There, in 1765, a deed, recorded in Deed Book 2-3, conveyed to them 400 acres of land on Clark's Creek; again in 1767, there was a deed for 400 acres on Pinch Gut Run; and in 1769, Jacob and Mary were joint grantees for 400 acres of land on Clark Creek of Catawba River. There are records indicating the purchase of other lands on Buffalo Creek in Mecklenburg County.

There is an entry of a petition in 1784, filed in Rowan County on behalf of the wife and children of Jacob Eagner, signed by citizens of Rowan and Mecklenburg Counties.⁵

Records of Mecklenburg County show a deed from the Sheriff, made under an execution in 1784, reciting that Jacob Eagner "has gone to join our late enemy," and therefore his property had been ordered by the Court to be sold and conveyed to Thomas Polk.

There is nothing further to show what became of this family, or where Jacob had gone to "join our late enemy."

Considering evidence tending to relate to age, it seems probable that Jacob Eagner had two brothers in Rowan County, (Peter and Henry) and there is some reason to assume that they were descendants of the Joh. Metheis Egener who had come to Pennsylvania in 1727, and that members of their family took active part in affairs of the state as the American Revolution grew imminent.

Rumple, in his History of Rowan County, says:

"It has been supposed that a considerable portion of the German population were neutral or averse to the war," but there are members of the Egener (Ager) family who proved an exception to this.

While there is nothing further bearing on it, records show that at a meeting of Rowan Committee of Safety on Sept. 20, 1775, one of those present was Peter Ager.

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"In all our history there has been nothing like these committees (of Safety) which had been authorized by the Provincial Congress of the State in August, 1774, a system later recommended for employment throughout the thirteen colonies.

"Born of necessity, originating in the political and economic confusion of the time, they touched the lives of the people in their most intimate affairs and gradually extended their jurisdiction until they assumed to themselves all the functions of government."⁶

It was contemplated in North Carolina that there should be a committee in each town, one for each county, as well as in the district and province at large.

The committees of a number of counties, including Rowan, from available accounts, were especially active and effective, though unfortunately for posterity, the names of all their members have not been preserved.

Peter Egnor (Ager) served in another field, judging from the record of payment made on his behalf, to Philip Fishburn, in 1786, by voucher No. 2350, issued at Warrenton for services during the Revolutionary War.⁷

The Census of 1790 for Rowan County lists:

Henry Aginder, Sr., no family other than himself.

Henry Aginder, Jr., head of a family, with three males under 16, and five females.

David Aginder, head of family, with three males under 16, three females.

Henry Aginder, Siner, of Rowan County, executed a Will dated Jan. 20, 1790, which was probated in 1792, and of record in Book C, page

273, of the Book of Wills of Rowan County, containing the following devises:

"I give and bequeath unto my son Henry Aginder *Juner* the plantation whereon I now live with one hundred and sixty acres of land. Thirdly I give unto my son David Agendar one hundred and sixty acres of land out of the tract I now live on the whole is three hundred and twenty acres in all to be equally divided between my two sons as they can agree. Henry is to have the home place and David is to have that part whereon he now lives. *Thirldly* my will is that my *to* granddaughters Catherine and Mary Agendar,⁸ Daughters of John Agendar *desesed* have an equal share of all my personal Estate with the rest of my children. Fifthly my will is that all my children and my *too* granddaughters named have an equal share of all my personal estate after my *disease*. I also appoint my *too* sons Henry and David Agendar Executors of this my last Will and Testament."

This Will is witnessed by Harmon Butner, Martha Butner and Adam Butner, a fact which may throw some light on where Henry Aginer, Siner, was living when he made the same, two years before his death. These three might have been close neighbors who were there at the time when the old man, "being old and infirm, but of perfect mind and memory calling to mind the immortality of body and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to die" called on them to witness his act in making his Will.

Harmon Butner, about 1776, married the widow of the noted Benjamin Merrill who was executed as a leader of the Regulation, and after their marriage Butner moved to her home and resided on her plantation near the Trading Ford in the Jersey Settlements.⁹ This location was east of the present Providence township in that part of Rowan County which has since become Davidson County.

There is a well established tradition—in the absence of its oldest records—that the family of Henry Agner, (Aginder) were among the earliest members of historic old Pine Meeting House—later known as Union Lutheran Church.

A land entry, No. 545, was issued March 6, 1778, to "the Church," (assumed to be Union Lutheran), or Pine Meeting House for 300 acres of land adjoining Henry Agenor.¹⁰

John Eager, (supposedly John Metheis Egner) enlisted October 1, 1777, and served for three years as a private in the 10th Regiment, Wilson's Company.¹¹

On May 17, 1784, 640 acres of land were allotted to Col. A. Lytle, on behalf of Metheis Egner, (presumed to be the same John Metheis

Egner who enlisted Oct. 1, 1777 and served for three years,) in payment for services as a soldier of the American Revolution.¹²

There is nothing in this or the record of payment to *John Eager* for military services to indicate that the soldier was then living, and though there is a variation in the spelling of the names, it appears probable that these two entries referred to one John Metheis Egner, son of Henry Aginder, Siner, who was the father of Catherine and Mary—a man who bore the same name as his immigrant ancestor who came to America in 1727.

The Will of Henry Aginder, Juner, dated April 3, 1798, was filed for probate in 1806, and is of record in Book C, pages 271-2, Records of Wills for Rowan County. This instrument names as devisees the widow Elizabeth, son Daniel, and his youngest son, as well as daughters whose names are not given.

Henry Agner, from the Marriage Records of Rowan County, married Elizabeth Erry on Sept. 20, 1775, and since the Will mentions his wife by the name of Elizabeth, it may be assumed that the two are the same.

Henry Agenor received a grant from the State of North Carolina in 1787, but there is nothing to indicate which Henry the grantee was, whether Senior or Junior.

Tax Lists of Rowan County for 1809, Capt. Lippard's Company, contain entries:¹³

Peter <i>Agener</i>	50 acres and 1 poll
Daniel <i>Agener</i>	150 acres, 1 poll
Widow <i>Agener</i>	160 acres
Peter <i>Agener</i> , D. S.	160 acres
Widow <i>Agener</i>	343 acres

Since Henry Aginder, Siner, listed only himself in the Census of 1790, it may well be that the two mentioned in the tax list of 1809 as "Widow Agener" were the widows of his son John Metheis, deceased prior to 1790, and of Henry, Juner, who died in 1806.

Again, the Tax List of 1814 lists:¹³

Daniel <i>Agnor</i>	228 acres
Widow <i>Agnor</i>	160 acres
Peter <i>Agnor</i>	160 acres
Benjamin <i>Agnor</i>	160 acres

The Records of Deeds for Rowan County have conveyances:

State of North Carolina to Henry Agenor	1787
George Basinger to Daniel Agner	1807
Samuel Trote to Peter Agner	1811

Sally Agner to Jacob Agner 1817

John Moyer to Henry Agner 1816

The Marriage Records of Rowan County give the following:

Peter Agenor married Katherine Rough October 21, 1809

John Smather, Bondsman.

Benjamin Agenor married Caty Bullon Dec. 17, 1811

Samuel Agenor married Polly Grubb April 5, 1816

Other Marriage Records in which the present form of spelling of the name appear are:

Daniel Agner to Resina Basinger July 12, 1802

Jacob Agner to Betsy Waller Jan. 28, 1818

Henry Agner to Caty Wise April 27, 1824

Isaac Agner to Christina Mull July 18, 1827

Alex. Agner to Luretta Cauble Jan. 4, 1842

Henry Agner to Sarah Arey Dec. 27, 1843

Milas A. Agner to Lucy Ann Winders May 2, 1844

Lewis Agner to Laura M. Holshouser Sept. 24, 1849

Milas A. Agner to Martha Jane Owen Mar. 9, 1859

Moses Agner to Margaret Kinkaid July 9, 1860

Lewis Agner to Aley C. Julian Aug. 21, 1860

John T. Agner to Crissy Cauble Dec. 10, 1857

The Will of Lewis Agner, dated Dec. 20, 1893, mentions as devisees his wife, Laura, a son Franklin L., and daughters Laura J. Agner, Mary L. Kluttz, Margaret Earnhardt and Comilla Lyerly. Another son, Henry L. M. Agner is named as one of the executors.

Union Lutheran Church, in Providence township, some five miles east of Salisbury, is one of the oldest churches founded by the German settlers in Rowan. Known in its early history as "Pine Meeting House", the original building of pine logs stood where the graveyard now is, until it was replaced about 1879 by the present structure of brick which had been made by members of its congregation. It was organized by Johann Gottfried Arndt, who came to Rowan from Germany about 1773 as a teacher of the boys and girls at Organ, in the southeastern part of the county.¹⁴

Tradition says that some of the Agner family were among its first members. The grave of E. Agner, who died in 1815, is one of the oldest with its inscription still legible among the stones in the churchyard. She was probably the mother of Daniel and wife of Henry Juner.

There are also the graves of:

Daniel Agner, born Feb. 14, 1778, died Feb. 24, 1838.

Rosa Agner, wife of Daniel Agner, Died July 5, 1859.

Frances Agner, daughter of Daniel, wife of James Goodman, died May 24, 1869, age 58 years.

Lewis Agner, born July 19, 1829, died August 14, 1903.

Eve Agner, daughter of L. and L. M. Agner, born Jan. 18, 1853, died March 9, 1854.

William D. Agner, born May 24, 1867, died June 17, 1867.

Isaac Agner, born December 20, 1803, died Jan. 23, 1844.

John F. Agner, born October 5, 1832, died April 11, 1890.

John F. J. Agner, born May 8, 1862, died Jan. 13, 1900.

Alex. Agner, Died Dec. 12, 1854. Age about 38 years.

Loretta Agner, born August 18, 1824. Wife of Alex. Agner.

Lucy B. Agner, born Oct. 14, 1906, died Dec. 7, 1909, daughter of W. A. and E. V. Agner.¹⁵

1 From research by Historical Publication Society, Philadelphia.

2 *Colonial Records*, Vol. 5, page 236.

3 Pennsylvania Colonial Records. List of Penna. German Pioneers. Strassburg. A collection of Upwards of Thirty Thousand Names of German, Swiss, Dutch, French and other Immigrants in Pennsylvania from 1727 to 1776. Ruppe.

4 History of Rockbridge County. Morton.

5 Colonial Records, Vol. 19, page 562.

6 History of North Carolina. Connor.

7 Colonial Records, Vol. 10, page 252.

8 This granddaughter Mary later married Johannes Smetter and moved to the Dutch Cove on Pigeon River, in Haywood County.

9 The Merrill Family. Dr. Wm. E. Merrill.

10 Data from Register of Deeds Office, Rowan County, N. C., furnished by W. D. Kizziah, who served 19 years as Registrar of that office.

11 Colonial Records, Vol. 16, page 1052.

12 Roster of Soldiers of the American Revolution, published by N. C. Daughters of the American Revolution.

13 Original Tax List now on file in State Department of Archives and History.

14 *Rhinelanders on the Yadkin*. Hammer.

15 Taken from records on file in the State Department of Archives and History.



Union Lutheran Church (Pine Meeting House) stands on site joining lands owned by Henry Agner in 1776.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Lutheran Faith Is Planted West of the Blue Ridge.

DEED Records of Haywood County show that during the year 1815, Johannes Smetter, (called in the deed John Smathers) purchased his first land in Haywood County. This lay in what was known as Fulbright's Cove, which within a few years was changed to Dutch Cove, as a result of the considerable contingent of Germans who had migrated there. Other tracts of land were bought by John Smathers—one from Montgomery Bell in 1818, and another from Martin Collins in 1819.

Henry Smathers, who with his family, had accompanied his brother John to Haywood, purchased an adjoining tract of the Fulbright land, where he remained until 1839, when tradition says 'he went west' of the Balsam Mountain.

John Fulbright had been an earlier comer to the Cove which for several years bore his name, and some time before 1811, had purchased large boundaries of land from Jacob Evans.

John and Mary Agner Smathers, with their Deutsch neighbors living in the mountains of Western North Carolina, were not long in demonstrating their faithfulness to characteristics of their forebears, of whom it was said:

"In every community where the Germans settled, a church and school house sprang up almost simultaneously with the settlement."¹

When the old Cherokee national lands had been opened for white settlers, adherents of the Baptist teachings began gathering in small groups, with some leader from among them as the preacher. A Baptist Church was organized at Locust Old Fields, in what was to become Haywood County, shortly after 1800 by Rev. Humphrey Posey, whose family lived in what is now Henderson County, and James Whitaker, who lived near Fairview.

Soon the Methodist circuit rider appeared, and with growth of the Camp Meeting movement, several large camp ground centers became popular.

Tradition says that Jacob Shook, whom Bishop Asbury mentioned in his diary as "Vater Shuck," provided room on the threshing floor of his large barn at Clyde, as a place for holding services when the Methodist circuit rider made his all too infrequent visits. Though a chapel

was built in the third story of the historic old Shook house, where the venerable bishop conducted his memorable sessions, a ground was also set aside for holding camp meetings. These camp grounds were prominent places in the mountain communities. Bishop Asbury, on a visit here in 1803 wrote: "On our route we passed two large encamping places of the Methodist and Presbyterians; it made the country look like the Holy Land."

A few miles from the Shook camp grounds at Clyde, there was another site known until within fairly recent years as Reno's Camp Ground. This, like the others, served as a gathering place for citizens of all denominations over a wide area of the western section and continued in use until after 1840.

All these places offered opportunity for and were frequented by many attending religious services there; other services were also provided, according to the good bishop's diary, for he says that on one trip "Henry Boehm went to Pigeon Creek to preach to the Dutch."

Though the records of its earliest years appear to be missing, by 1825 the first Lutheran Church west of the Blue Ridge had been founded in Dutch Cove—the historic Morning Star²—and with it at least some type of school for the youth of the settlement.

There are pages missing, also, from the history of the Rev. Nehemiah Bonham's first coming to the Cove, where he no doubt had started some kind of work before he began making reports to Synod in 1825. No record has been found of his early life, who his parents were, or just where they lived. However, at the time he was licensed to preach in 1790, the Rev. Paul Henkle, under whom Mr. Bonham studied theology, was closely associated with the Germans of Rowan County, and the Lutheran Churches there. Among the families listed in the Census of 1790, living in that part of North Carolina there appeared the names of Bonham and the other families who later moved to Haywood County.

The last visit of Rev. Paul Henkle to the churches of this state had been in 1805, and about ten years later, members of his family were among the organizers of a classical and theological school in eastern Tennessee.

The General Synod of the church in North Carolina had been organized in 1803, but later differences among its leaders resulted in some of them, with their congregations, severing connection with the body in this state, to become associated with that in Tennessee. Among these, the Rev. Nehemiah Bonham and his little group at Morning Star, in the Dutch Cove of Haywood County, are shown in the report of 1825.

A diary kept by the old minister contains many entries relating to his work among the Germans in Western North Carolina, and furnishes invaluable data concerning these people.³

Mr. Bonham, with his unbounded energy, was at that time extending his missionary efforts as far as Habersham, Carrol County, Ga., into Tennessee and South Carolina, as well as serving the people in Haywood County. According to his diary, his family, during the early years here, continued to live in Virginia, where the minister also participated in the work of his church.

His first mention of his field in Haywood County in the old diary is in 1828; and following this his chronicles cover ten years, ending with an entry of April 26, 1838, and says:

Wednesday—April 15—1829. Went on to Haywood and staid all night with Collon Jacob Smith.⁴

Thursday—16th—Went into Fulbright's Cove and staid all night with Henry Miller—

Friday 17—I went to Fulbright's staid all night preached there.

Saturday—18—I returned to Mr. Miller's and in the afternoon I went to Mr. Snider's to get *dead* for a meeting house of 3 acres perfected to my satisfaction.⁵

Sunday—19—Preached—Monday started on my route to Georgia—stayed all night with Bonney Fulbright.

Wednesday—June 10—1829—I journeyed to Fulbright's Cove I staid all night with old brother Henry Miller

Thursday—June 11—I taught school and Friday—June 12—Saturday—June 13—Sunday—June 14—preaching commenced on my stand on meeting house grounds and finished at Redsleafs house on account of a hard gust of rain.^{6, 7}

15—16—17—18—19 and 20—In the evening I gave the sacrament to a sick woman who could not attend at the stand. There were 50 members communed on this day. The people never *brook* up until 10 oclock in the cove that night.

Rev. Mr. Bonham then went to his home in Virginia, and remained there from Thursday, Sept. 28, 1829, until July 30, 1830, when he returned to his field in Haywood County:

Monday—11—(October, 1830) I started on to Maclenburg County to the Morning Star Church in company with Mr. Eforth who conveyed me across the Rocky River. Came to Jacob Longs on Goos Creek staid all night.⁸

Monday—7 November—1830—went up in the Cove to ould Henry Millers.⁹

Saturday—11 November—I staid at Mr. Redsleafs.

Sunday 12—Preached my stand Haywood County.

Tuesday—21 December—1830—I started on in a most seveal cold day for Georgia.

Wednesday—16 February—1831—I staid all night with Mr Redsleaf.

Thursday—17—I staid all night with Henry Smathers.

Friday—18—I staid with Henry Miller.

The venerable minister stayed at this home again on Saturday, and

Sunday—19—1831—I preached at the Morning Star Haywood County Fulbright's Cove.¹⁰ Staid all night with Redsleafs.

Thursday—24 November—1831—Went on my way to Fulbright's Cove staid all night with Mr. Redsleaf.

After remaining there the following night, on Saturday—26—went and staid all night with auld Mr. Fulbright.

Sunday—27—I went to the Morning Star Church,¹¹ preached here went home with Ambrose Miller staid all night with this respectable man.

Monday—28—I went to view my farm in this cove of Fulbrights staid all night with Mr. Isack Smathers.¹²

Wedensday—29—I went on and staid all night with Mr. John Snyder who presented me a number of apple trees.

The following day the minister preached at the home of George Garland and spent the next two days at George Miller's.

Saturday—Dec. 3—Attended our church meeting at the Morning Star went home with Mr. Redsleaf.

Sunday—4—I preached here it being too cold at the meeting house.¹³

Following this service Rev. Mr. Bonham went on to his field in Tennessee and remained for some time before resuming activities in Haywood County, on

1832—Friday—20 January Mr Redsleaf hauled my apple trees to my farm and he and Abraham Fulbright and Isac Smathers and myself planted out 41 trees on the 20 day of January—1832.

Saturday—21—Planted out all the others In all 86 apple and 3 pear trees I went and stayed all night at Redsleafs.

Sunday—22—Preached at Morning Star.

Monday—23—Went and looked at a *pease* of land and staid all night with Peter Miller.

Tuesday—24—Went to the land office and entered 250 acres of land returned and staid at ould Henry Smathers.¹⁴

Wednesday—25—Went and staid with William Smith All this was done in Haywood County N C

The next day the intrepid minister started his journey to his field in South Carolina, and on his return

Tuesday—May 7—I went to my farm that was given me in Haywood County Staid all night with Isac Smathers.

Thursday—June 14—I came to brother Millers got my hames mended and went with Mr. Miller and Mr. Resleaf to Mr. Henry Millers in order to bring about a reconciliation between two *conspekous* members of our church—in which we spent the whole night we gained our point and was thankful.

Monday—13 August—1832—I met my wife and two of my sons and

two daughters — On my way home spent the night with my son John Bonham.

Thursday—27 September—1832—We started on staid all night with Peter Miller.

From there, the minister, accompanied on her first trip to Haywood County by his wife, went to look at "our track of land, and in the evening went to Redsleafs."

Monday—29 April—1833—Started for Haywood Staid with ould Mr. Miller.

Following this, the venerable minister was a guest of Peter Miller, then Mr. Redsleaf, Peter Fulbright, and started up to his place in the head of the Cove, where he stayed two days with Ambrose Miller.

Sunday—April 5—Went and preached at Morning Star went on in the evening staid all night with Collon Jacob Smith.

After spending some time in Virginia, the next entry appears:

Wenesday—1 October 1834—All this week I was catuesome, (Catechist) at Morning Star Staid all night with Isac Smathers Gave my horse a much needed rest and I also—

Thursday 2—Went to Church to instruct youth staid with George Garland.

Two days were spent with the Redsleaf family, and

Sunday—5—Held a Sacremental meeting at Morning Star staid with George Miller.

Saturday—1st of November—1834—which is my birthday I enter my 70th year.

Sunday, Nov 30—I preached at Morning Star when the sun was in eclipse Staid all night with Ambrose Miller.

Tuesday—June 16—1835—I preached at Morning Star went home with Henry Miller—

Sunday—June 21—1835—Returned preached at Morning Star Church went and staid with Brother Henry Redsleaf and preached there Sunday night Monday—2—started on my way to Georgia.

Thursday—17 March—1836—I started on staid at Moors good people on Pigeon River.¹⁵

From there, the old minister went to George Miller's for two days. The dates of these entries indicate that he had been absent from Haywood County for some time. During early days, last rites for a deceased person were often delayed months, perhaps longer, when no minister was available at the time of interment. This probably was true with more than one family among his group at Morning Star, when he notes that

Sunday—20—I went on to church preached father Fulbright's funeral and in the evening went to George Cooks and married his daughter to Levy Smathers.

Friday—March 25—1836—I commenced collecting at Morning Star staid all night with Ambrose Miller.

Saturday—26—Collected at Morning Star staid with Mrs. Redsleaf—
Sunday—27—preached Mr. Redsleafs funeral staid with Mrs. Redsleaf also and spent sometime instructing the youth.

Tuesday, April 19, 1836, was a day of tremendous importance for the Lutherans in the Cove, when their leader "Went to Court and a *dead* recorded for the Morning Star Church".

The next Monday, the minister visited parishioners:

"Went to my plantation in the Cove and staid all night with Mrs. Smathers."¹⁶

After a short visit to Virginia, Mr. Bonham, accompanied by his wife, began their trip to North Carolina, where on Friday, Jan. 7, 1837, they rested at George Miller's and next morning attended a Baptist meeting at "Locustfield."

The itinerary through Haywood County was marked by stops at his usual places, and services at Morning Star. Mr. Bonham says that on

June 1—1837—We returned to George Millers staid all night, and Friday—Mr. George Miller and myself went to meet Mr. Easterly and to our great joy met him on the top of Newfound Mountain and returned to Mr. Miller's where we staid all night.

Saturday—3 June—1837—We reported to the Morning Star Church where Mr. Easterly delivered a very interesting preparation sermon We staid with Mrs. Redsleaf.¹⁷

Sunday—4—Mr. Easterly delivered a wonderful sermon on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, one in the German language and the other in the English language, and at night he preached at George Miller's."

Next morning, the two ministers parted in Waynesville, Mr. Easterly going to Tennessee and Mr. Bonham to his home in Virginia.

The next entry in his diary notes that on Sunday, November 19, Rev. Mr. Bonham, with the stock and one wagon, and all his family except a sick son, started moving to Haywood County, where they arrived at "Mr H. Miller's on December 6."

Thursday—7—We rested here in order to get houses to shelter in and on Friday we went one mile to the house we are now in 1838. After reposing at home all winter I started on my route Thursday 26 April—1838.

Parochial reports of his work had shown rapid increase in his congregation at Morning Star, where in 1839, he baptized 80 infants, 2 slaves and one adult, and confirmed 18 persons.

The Synod at its meeting in Tennessee in 1843, entered a resolution:

"Inasmuch as Mr. Bonham, in consequence of his great age and in other respects is, in a great measure, incapable of discharging the duties of a minister of the Gospel,

RESOLVED, That he be advised by this body to retire from the ministry and abide with his family in peace."

Despite this, when Synod met at Zion Church, Catawba, in North

Carolina in 1844, there was presented evidence that the old minister, far from being incapable of carrying on his work, had accomplished notable results. At the Church of Morning Star, during the four years from 1840, Mr. Bonham had baptized 202 infants, 5 adults, and 4 slaves, and one had been confirmed.

The leader of the people in Dutch Cove did not attend Synod the following year, and in 1848, his Obituary was recorded, (in the Tennessee Synod's records) with a concluding sentence:

"He departed this life on the 5 day of November, 1846, aged 81 years and 4 days of which about 54 had been devoted to the ministry. His death was lamented by an affectionate wife and 8 children, and also the little flock which he had gathered at Morning Star Church, Haywood County, N. C., at which place his remains were solemnly deposited."

Within recent years a shaft of grey granite has been erected by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Tennessee to mark the grave of this pioneer minister among the Germans of Dutch Cove.

- 1 History of North Carolina. Connor.
- 2 A historical marker has been placed in Canton by the State Dept. of Archives and History, indicating the history and location of this church at Morning Star.
- 3 Original diary owned by Harmon Moore, Canton, N. C.
- 4 Collon Jacob Smith bought land in Haywood Co. in 1810.
- 5 This deed recorded in Book C, page 422, Haywood County records, is made to Peter Fulbright, Henry Rhodarmer and George Miller, Trustees of Snyder's Meeting House, a Lutheran Church to be under the direction of Tennessee and adjoining States, and agreeable to the Augsburg Confession.
- 6 Judging from this reference to a meeting house stand, it would appear that no church building had been erected on the property acquired from Adam Snyder, which the minister referred to in 1831 as the Morning Star.
- 7 This family referred to as Redleaf was the same as Rhodarmer—a German name which had been translated Redleeve. After the War Between the States, through due legal process, it was changed back to the original form, Rhodarmer.
- 8 This probably referred to a church in Mecklenburg Co., under Mr. Bonham's charge, which was an older organization also known as Morning Star.
- 9 According to a deed from J. A. Miller to Levi Smathers, conveying lands of Henry Miller, Sr., in 1837,—as shown in Deed Book D, page 21 Haywood County Records, "ould man Henry Miller" lived on property adjoining that of John Smathers which he had purchased from Fulbright in 1816. This deed refers to it as being in "Duch" Cove.
- 10 This appears to be the first time Mr. Bonham had called his stand in the Cove by this name.
- 11 Here the minister speaks of Morning Star Church, indicating that some kind of building had now been provided at the meeting place.

- 12 This was the oldest son of John and Mary Agner Smathers. He had purchased two tracts of land from Adam Snyder in 1829 and probably lived near Morning Star. He married Mary (Polly) Miller, a daughter of the man Mr. Bonham called "auld man Henry Miller."
- 13 This seems to indicate very definitely that there was a house of some type in the Cove at Morning Star.
- 14 Ould Henry was a brother of John Smathers.
- 15 Since the original diary of Mr. Bonham was found in the attic of the family of Harmon Moore of Canton, it may reasonably be assumed that this entry refers to some of his ancestors.
- 16 Here it may be concluded another member of his flock had died and been interred in his absence, if this referred to the widow of Isaac Smathers, since her husband died October 23, 1935, and was buried at Locust Old Fields.
- 17 The Obituary of Rev. N. Bonham was written in 1848, for the Tennessee Synod. Rev. George Easterly had been appointed to assist in preparing a history of the old minister's life for this work, which leads to the conclusion that this was one and the same man who had preached at Morning Star in June, 1837.

CHAPTER FIVE

Citizens on Pigeon River

THE entire colony of settlers constituting the German, or so called Pennsylvania Deutsch in Haywood County brought with them many of the traits and customs of their early Pietist or Quietist ways, their racial legacy from the Old Country. Simplicity of dress and a shrinking from all display was strongly ingrained, and nowhere was this more evidenced than in their burial of their dead. Headstones, small and unpretentious, a large proportion of them made from native rock, lettered by some one of the family, marked many of the graves. Passing of Time has obliterated the lettering, so often nothing can be deciphered in the inscriptions. This, coupled with the fact that the earliest family records were written in German—some of which have been lost by fire and otherwise, makes it no easy task to gather anything like a complete record of the people and history of Dutch Cove.

It has been said of the descendants of John and Mary Agner Smathers that they have formed the largest contingent of men from Western North Carolina serving in the successive wars since our conflict with Spain, and with fewer casualties than is commonly rated among those in military service. However this may be, with the greater number of both men and women,

“Theirs have been the world-sustaining arts of peace, and upon that merit they have stood and will stand. Theirs the nobility of labor, the long pedigree of toil.”¹

John Smathers, (who does not appear in any of the records concerning him after he came to Haywood County as Johannes Smetter,) died in 1825, probably before any consecrated burial ground had been established in Dutch Cove, or where Morning Star was later located. He is buried a few miles from his early home place, in the historic cemetery at Locust Old Fields, in Canton.

The Church at this place, which is located on a site long used as a landmark by the Cherokee Indians and called by their name, Locust Old Fields, was established by Rev. Humphrey Posey and James Brittain in early years after 1800, and in its cemetery are the graves of many pioneer citizens of that section of Haywood County.

After her husband's death, Mary Agner Smathers continued to make her home in Dutch Cove for a long time. Her son, the Eisig whose name is recorded in the old German Prayer Book as being born in

184, (eighteen hundred and four) had married a daughter of old Henry Miller, a near neighbor, about the time of his father's death. His home was probably not far from that of his mother, as he bought 130 acres from his uncle Henry Smathers in 1829—a part of the land which had originally belonged to John Fulbright. Adam Snider had also conveyed land to Isaac Smathers in 1829—this grantor no doubt being the same person as the Adam Snyder who made the deed for the Lutheran Church.

Isaac Smathers (Eisig) died October 23, 1835, and was buried beside his father at Locust Old Fields. The stone which marked his grave stood until recent years, much weathered and with all lettering worn away. Though a grandson had re-traced the inscription with a steel instrument, that it might not be lost to sight, the stone can not now be located—apparently in carrying out work at the cemetery it has been removed. Since his burial there, and after the death of his mother, Mary Agner Smathers, she was interred on the space between his grave and that of his father.

Mary Miller Smathers, after the death of her husband Isaac, lived for some years in Dutch Cove, but in 1851, N. Edmondson, as guardian for the minor heirs of Isaac Smathers, deceased, (Manson, Philip, and Mary Ann) and the oldest son, Nelson Amanuel, who had reached his majority, by a deed of record in Book F, page 72 of the Haywood County Records, conveyed part of their late father's real estate to George F. Smathers; another conveyance in 1856, appears to have been made by the heirs of Isaac Smathers to George Smathers, covering four tracts.

According to the Census of 1850, and later recollections of her descendants, Mary Miller (or Granny Polly) Smathers, made her home with her son Nelson, who lived in South Carolina for a few years after 1875, and then moved to a farm on Glady Branch, near Candler, in Buncombe County. As her age advanced, she ceased to speak English and returned to the native language of her ancestors, Low German. She is buried at Piney Mountain, the family church of her son Nelson, where he, with his wife, a number of his children and many of his descendants also rest.

George Smathers, (the Yorg whom the old German Prayer Book says was born 187—that, is eighteen hundred and seven) not only purchased large boundaries of land in Dutch Cove and the surrounding country, but also had a lot of property in the vicinity of Canton, extending down to the Buncombe County line. There does not seem to be any record of sale or administration of the John Smathers (Johannes

Smetter) lands, to indicate whether George purchased these after his father's death.

According to best tradition, Mary Agner Smathers continued to make her home on lands in Dutch Cove, until some time about 1850. Her son Levi had purchased part, if not all the home place of Henry Miller, Sr., near her and lived there for a long time, with his brothers Jesse and Charley as near neighbors.

When Levi purchased the historic old place known as the Jacob Shook house at Clyde, about 1850, Mary Agner Smathers moved there with him and continued to make it her home until her death November 18, 1868.

Many of her personal belongings, principally clothing, have been preserved in the third floor chapel of this house. Among these is the old money bag, made of homespun and reputedly sewn by her own hands, its mouth firmly tied, to be suspended from a belt around her waist, in which the elderly dame carried her funds.

Her estate, after her death, was managed and closed by a grandson, J. C., commonly called "Turnpike John," son of George (Yorg) and Eva Smathers. Family stories of her property say that it consisted of money, all of which was in Confederate currency.

She was the only member of the Agner family, so far as is known, who was ever a resident of Haywood County.

Henry Smathers, born about 1774-5, came to Haywood County with his brother John and his family—there is no record of his wife's name, or where they were married, but according to the best procurable information, the couple had a number of children who had been born before they came to Dutch Cove.

Henry bought land, in 1815, from John Fulbright; its description leads to the assumption that it lay very near his brother John. In several transactions, from 1829 to 1839, he sold all his property in Haywood County, and removed further west in the State.

There is an oft repeated tradition in the family that the two brothers, who lived on adjoining places, which they had bought from Fulbright, reached a parting of the ways before John's death. The old story is that the children playing in the Gum Spring, which was located on the dividing property line and used in common by both families, created conditions which resulted in a breach of relations, following which Henry moved with his wife and young people across the Balsam range.

With due respect to family traditions, it seems more probable that his family, having reached a mature age, and his brother John then being deceased, conditions "across the mountains" may have influenced his decision to leave the Cove.

Though there seems no record of marriages, or other transactions which give any help, it has been said that the children of Henry Smathers and his wife, (probably all born before he moved to Dutch Cove) were:

Little Henry, born about 1796, who married Catherine Fulbright in Haywood County in 1816.

Alfred, wife not known, may have had children Scott and Mark.

George, wife not known, said to have had a son known as Dutch.

Role, whose children have been said to be Graham, Asbury, (probably named for the venerable Methodist Bishop), and Richard.

John, who is believed to have lived near the present village of Candler, in Buncombe County, after his marriage to Ruth Liner in 1829.

A twin brother of John, Isaac, was thought to have gone to Texas.

Catherine, born about 1811, married a Snyder, probably a member of the family of the name who lived in Dutch Cove.

Another son, Daniel, was born about 1814.

1 Rhinelanders on the Yadkin. Hammer.

CHAPTER SIX

The Descendants of John and Mary Agner Smathers.

John Smathers, (originally known as Johannes Smetters) born Dec. 17, 1781, died Feb. 10, 1825. Married, about 1803, Mary Agner, who died November 28, 1868. Aged 92.

Their Children:

Isaac, (The Eisig mentioned in the old German Book) born February 7, 1804, died October 23, 1835.

George (the Yorg mentioned in the old German Book) born Sept. 9, 1807, died June 24, 1894.

Jesse, born December 19, 1811, died February 20, 1879.

Levi, born Sept. 9, 1817, died March 4, 1896.

Charley, born July 21, 1819, died December 8, 1906.

The Family of Isaac Smathers.

Isaac Smathers, (The Eisig mentioned in the German Book). Married Mary (Polly) Miller about 1826. She was a daughter of the Henry Miller mentioned by Rev. Nehemiah Bonham, and was born in 1801, died 1896.

Their Children:

Nelson, born October 13, 1827, died January 1, 1911. Married Margaret Henderson.

Mary Ann, who married George Cook.

Manson, born October 18, 1831. Married (1) Polly Kinsland, (2) Susie Welch in 1854, (3) Mary Ann Cook.

Philip, born June 12, 1835, died January 12, 1865. Married Julet Dorothy Miller.

Nelson A. Smathers enlisted June 13, 1862, in Haywood County, in Company C, 69th Regiment, and served in the widely known Thomas Legion.

There is an old tradition in the family that Philip Smathers served as a soldier during the War Between the States, and was wounded near the close, though he survived for a short time.

Isaac Smathers is buried near his parents, John and Mary Agner Smathers at Locust Old Fields. His wife, Polly, is buried at Piney Mountain in Buncombe County.

The Family of Nelson Amanuel Smathers

Married Margaret (Peggy) Henderson, daughter of Archibald Henry and Susan Jacobs Henderson. She was born December 22, 1826, in Spartanburg County, S. C., died June 4, 1900.

Their Children:

Harriett, who married Robert Young.

Henry Austin, married (1) Sophia Ownby (2) Addie Stines.

Amanuel Lorenzo, married Ellen Ownby.

Celia Ann, married David Warren.

Philip Asbury, married (1) Margaret Morgan (2) Dora Morgan.

Isaac Wexler, married (1) Amy Morgan (2) Margaret E. Rickman.

L. Vester, married Margaret Wilson.

John Wesley, born January 31, 1861, died October 15, 1943, married Mary Rickman.

Hester, married Stephen Morgan.

Nelson A. Smathers and his wife, Margaret Henderson Smathers are buried at Piney Mountain in Buncombe County.

Her parents, Archibald Henry Henderson, who died in 1868, and his wife, Susan Jacobs Henderson, who died in 1865, are buried in Locust Old Fields. The stones marking their graves, being greatly weathered and eroded, have been removed within recent years.

The Family of George Smathers

2nd son of John and Mary Agner Smathers, married Eva Kinsland.

They are buried near his parents at Locust Old Fields.

Their Children:

James, married Docia Sharp in 1854. There is a record of their marriage in Haywood County.

John C., married Lucille Johnson

Emeline, married Columbus Rogers.

Minerva, married John Curtis.

Maney, married Elisha Morgan.

Jane, married Riley Clontz.

Louisa, married J. Bradford Mease

William, who was killed in the War Between the States.

The second son of this couple, John C. Smathers, widely known as "Turnpike John," has been described by more than one writer as 'the finest example of the old time pioneer.' His home, the old Turnpike Hotel, was for years a popular hostelry on the stagecoach road, half way between Asheville and Waynesville. It has often been said that the trees in front of this house, which grew to remarkable size, had

been planted by him when they were small enough that he carried them to the site on his shoulder.

Among the many crafts to which this venerable man fitted a skilful hand, he was known as a good rock and brick mason, a carpenter, shoemaker, tinner, painter and blacksmith, harness and saddlemaker. At times, he also proved himself a master plumber, butcher, fruitgrower and bee keeper, was successful in the poultry raising field, and his stables sheltered fine stock. He kept a store and the hotel; was school master and lawyer, who on occasions also served as a country doctor. His spare time was devoted to Bible study, politics and his well kept gardens, and it was said that at the age of eighty five, he sometimes indulged in a foot race, or came off victor in wrestling, "catch as catch can".

The Family of Jesse Smathers

3rd son of John and Mary Agner Smathers, married Amanda Hefley.

Their Children:

John, married Jane Johnson.

Burton, married Elizabeth Penland.

George, married Harriett Reno.

Laura, married Robert Winfield.

Josephine, married William Burnett.

Haseltine, married Dr. Hascue Russell.

Deberry

Pulliam, who left no heirs.

Both Jessie and his wife are buried in the yard at Morning Star.

Family of Levi Smathers

4th son of John and Mary Agner Smathers.

Levi Smathers, born Sept. 9, 1817, died Mar. 4, 1896. Married Sallie Cook, born Sept. 11, 1818. Died Feb. 11, 1900. This is the marriage recorded by Rev. N. Bonham in his diary.

Their Children:

C. L. Smathers, born Dec. 21, 1844, died April 23, 1912. Married Maggie Caldwell, born May 11, 1856, died Feb. 7, 1940.

Nancy, born Jan. 10, 1848, died Dec. 25, 1940. Married J. M. Haynes, born Dec. 10, 1848, died Jan. 19, 1930.

D. I. L. Smathers, born Dec. 5, 1860, died Feb. 26, 1937. Married Mattie Killian, born Feb. 14, 1855, died Nov. 24, 1924.

Levi Smathers and his wife, who lived at the Jacob Shook place at Clyde, are buried in the churchyard in that village.

Family of Charley Smathers

5th son of John and Mary Agner Smathers, married Margaret Cook (Peggy).

Their Children:

Jesse, who married Mary Henson.

Emeline, married Thomas Timmons.

Louise, married Elisha Henson.

Minerva, married Kimsey Rhodarmer.

Amanda, married Allen Shope.

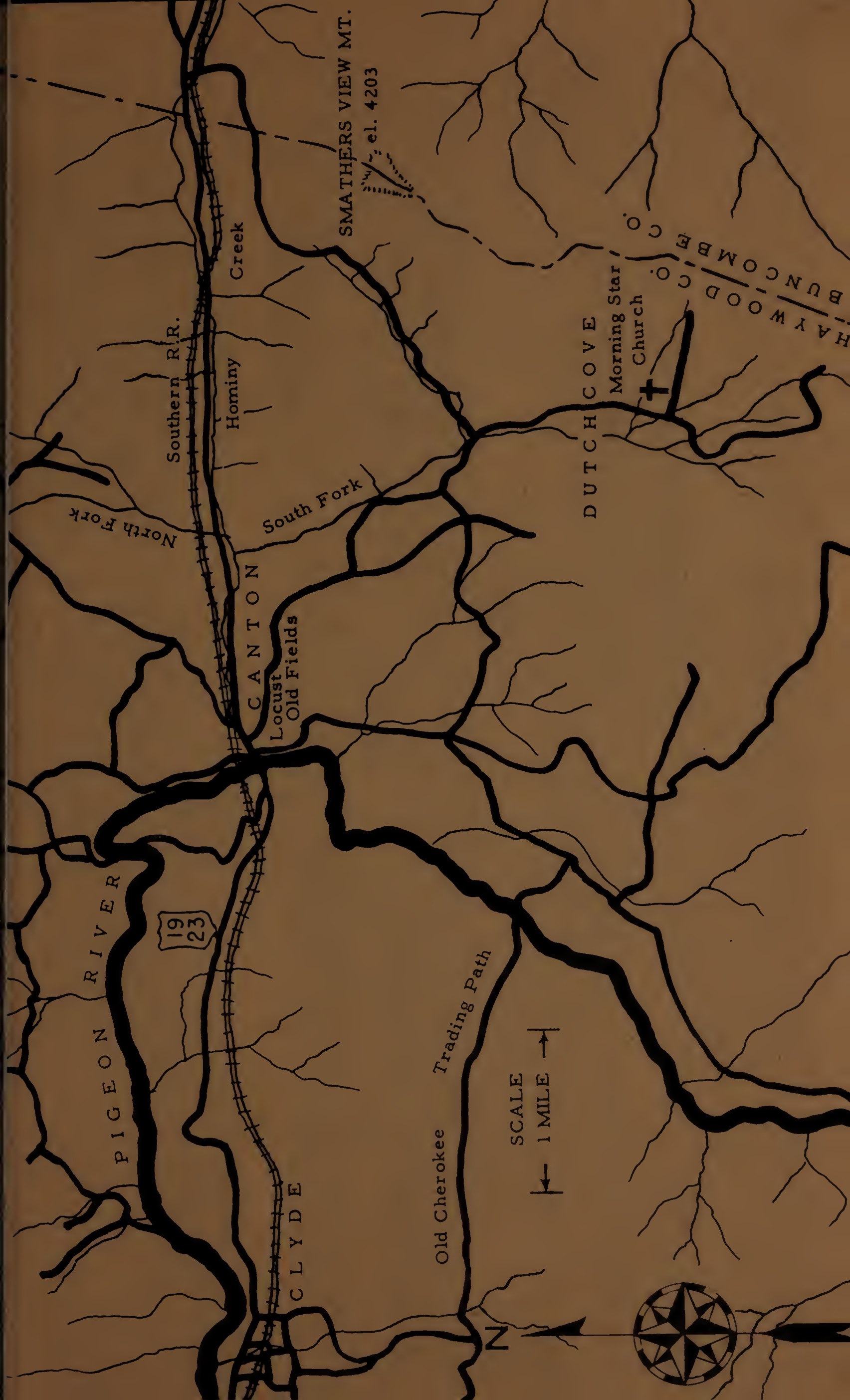
Turner, married Miss Bryson.

Parthena, married Francis Wilson.

Burton, married Kinsland.

Baxter, married (1) Hester Russell (2) (Mrs.) Josephine Hall.

Charlie Smathers was six years old at the death of his father, the Johannes Smetter mentioned in the old German Hymnal and Prayer Book. He and his wife are buried at Morning Star.



SMATHERS VIEW MT.

el. 4203

Southern R.R.

Creek

Hominy

North Fork

South Fork

CANTON

Locust
Old Fields

PIGEON RIVER

19
23

CLYDE

Trading Path

Old Cherokee

DUTCH COVE

Morning Star
Church

HAYWOOD CO.
BUNCOMBE CO.

N

SCALE

1 MILE

